



Welcome to membership



We are very pleased to welcome Richard Dighton and Ben Harvey as members at our service and shared lunch on 28th January. In the photo above Richard is on the left, with our Minister Lewis Connolly, then Ben and our Chair of Trustees, Ann Baepler.



Some of us chatting before lunch in our hall

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Thank you to all the workers!



From the evening of Friday 9th through Saturday to Sunday 11th February, this trio of workers transformed the kitchen in our hall and installed a new set of units, electric hob and worktops. The restriction on time because of the Garden House Nursery using the hall during the week meant they all had to be speedy workers! From left to right in the photo, David Forsdike, builder helper Dean and our Property Manager Phil Chatfield did a sterling job and we are very grateful. We also include Tessa Forsdike, Paulette Reed, Ali Mercer, Linda King and Riena Jackson in this vote of thanks as they all offered sterling support in emptying the cupboard units, sorting and recycling before finding a home for all the useful items in the new units and cleaning up afterwards.

Living with gods, people, places and worlds beyond

The focus of this exhibition at the British Museum is not so much on what people believe, but on how they express their beliefs, through an exhibition of objects of faith from all parts of the world and on how important to human beings a sense of faith can be. As faith is so intangible and sometimes transitory, then finding objects which reflect and represent belief is a way of bringing this insubstantial, yet personally vitally important 'thing' into a tangible reality.

There are sections on the expression of faith through the elements of air, light, fire, earth, wind, Nature, water and the effects that such elements have on our existence and survival. Some exhibits reflect our sense of danger and the vulnerability of children, of childbirth and the understandable need of some people to seek a way of protecting such vulnerability. As one wall text says –

Seeing how people believe rather than considering what they believe suggests a natural inclination for transcendent worlds and beings. Stimulated by our senses, our minds connect and express thoughts that through stories, objects, images and rituals decrease anxieties and help to form strong social bonds, making our worlds well-ordered and understandable. As this tendency is natural to all human beings, it begs the question of whether the modern human species should be defined as wise, 'Homo sapiens', or as believing, 'Homo Religiosus'?

The whole exhibition prompted reflection on the vastness of the human experience, on the links between different peoples across the world and how some faith ceremonies and rituals have not only a common purpose, but also similar symbols and practices, even when there has been no contact, suggesting a common human wisdom.

As each of us will respond (especially as Unitarians) in individual ways to the exhibition, I will offer some wall texts as samples of the prompts we read. You can then respond in your own way, whether you go in person to the exhibition or not.

Public celebrations – festivals and processions make religions visible and are often expensive, needing effort, time, resources and sometimes a huge workforce. They involve complex rituals depending on arts and knowledge of traditions that establish individual and community identities, encouraging competition and collaboration between and among

different social classes and regional groups. In faiths that do not have communal worship at daily or weekly set times, coming together to celebrate provides a sense of unity and emotional support.

The wheel of life – The human mind gives rise to a fearful awareness of death and great anxieties about living. To get over these fears people engage with invisible worlds and beings to reinforce the effectiveness of everyday practical actions. Beliefs expressed through objects and rituals help to give confidence, reduce stress and engage support for all that life brings from conception to death. These beliefs form and are strengthened through practice rather than written authority, as may be seen in the many objects, some trivial, others sacred, associated with the cycle of life.

Conflict and co-existence – The practice and experience of beliefs are natural to all people. The recognition of supernatural beings in worlds beyond nature reflects how the human brain generates thoughts and experience in response to the senses. Consequently, religion cannot be regarded as an add-on to identities and societies but as a deeply rooted part of them. The commitment, power and control that come out of this as political and often cause fear, prejudice, exclusion, persecution, violence and, particularly on a personal level, confusion.

We all have thoughts about religion, about faith, about the difference ... Here are a few quotes also featured in the exhibition –

God gave us music that we may pray without words – St Augustine of Hippo

Om mani padme hum (sacred, bead, lotus flower, enlightenment) – Buddhist mantra

No state has ever been founded without religion serving as its base – Jean Jaques Rousseau

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed ... the opium of the people – Karl Marx

The most beautiful and profound experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science – Albert Einstein

When we left the exhibition, I was trying to measure what I had experienced and observed with my understanding of my own faith. I am still working out my personal response, but as a Unitarian, I felt challenged. As I understand Unitarianism, we avoid symbols, rituals, routines ... and yet our services

Living with gods, people, places and worlds beyond – cont.

follow a pattern, we have the chalice as a potent symbol of light and energy, as only two examples. Sadly there was no mention of Unitarianism in the displays and no acknowledgement of our chalice as an object of faith. We may not agree with all the faiths (though we respect all divergent and honest expressions of faith), but this exhibition suggested to me that we can learn a lot from others.

The exhibition is on at the British Museum in room 35 until 8th April and is worth a visit. Entry to the exhibition is £15 (under 16s free) and you can turn up or book at www.britishmuseum.org. It accompanies a BBC Radio 4 series by Neil MacGregor (former Director of the Museum) and there is a book published by Allen Lane.
by Tessa Forsdike

Workshop on Nurturing Volunteers

Saturday 10 March 2018

at the Unitarian Meeting House, Churchgate Street,
Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RH
10.30 for 11am to 3.45pm

The East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group has organised a day workshop on the subject of volunteering – best practice, support outside & within congregations. We also hope that the day will be an opportunity for people in the East Anglian Unitarian congregations to meet & get to know one another better.

Judith Farmer & Lynne Davies from Norwich will present short clips of their work with support groups for people living with dementia and their carers in the community and of their work with prisoners.

Paulette Reed, Riena Jackson & Linda King from Ipswich will focus on the team work & support needed in the face of having to care for an old, much loved building. Please bring a packed lunch. Tea & coffee will be provided. There are plenty of cafes & sandwich shops in the vicinity if you don't wish to eat a packed lunch in the Meeting House.

Cheapest parking is at Ram Meadow IP33 2AR or at Shire Hall weekend car park IP33 2AR. Both entail about a 10-15 minute walk.

It would be helpful, but not essential, if you would let an EAUWG member know if you are planning to attend.

Further details or enquiries please contact Linda King
01473 712366 or lindapendal@gmail.com

TROUBLED ISRAEL - 2017

I visited Israel for the second time in my life in November 2017 when I stayed for nearly a week with Mati and Lily Yellin at their home about an hour's drive from Jerusalem. Lily was the Jewish guide to a group (of which I was a member), on my first visit to The Holy Land in November 2011. Mati and Lily were excellent hosts. I had the pleasure in my stay with them of meeting their three sons and seven grandchildren.

On the first day of my visit, Lily and I (after the inevitable queue to get in) visited the large walled area which has at its centre the Dome of the Rock. *"The Dome of the Rock is one of the world's most magnificent architectural treasures and one of the holiest sites in Islam"*. - quote from "Explore Jerusalem 2011" endorsed by the Mayor of Jerusalem. *"This glorious structure is built over a rock that is believed by Muslims to be the place where Mohammed rose to heaven."*

It is also believed by Jews to be the place where God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his only son Isaac and provided *"a ram caught in a thicket by its thorns ..."* Genesis 22 Verses 1 – 13. Please read it – I think for me, it is one of the 'less satisfactory' stories in the Old Testament - only acceptable because in Verse 1 of Genesis Chapter 22 it says *"God did tempt Abraham ..."*

Only one hour is allowed on the site and when it was time to leave, Lily and I were ushered out down the nearest wide stairway into what was the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem. We had no choice but to take this route. Lily said later that she was quite frightened at having to pass through the busy narrow streets at the bottom of the stairway. We soon reached the Christian Quarter and Lily relaxed. It was my first introduction to the tense pressure felt by the Jews when they are in the 'wrong' part of their own capital city.

Lily, with her grandson 8 year old Ido had visited me at home in Suffolk in the summer for a quick two day stay and at the time said

TROUBLED ISRAEL – 2017 – cont.

"You are living in Heaven – such a beautiful countryside and a feeling of peace" Following my visit to Israel I am beginning to realise why she made the comment.

by John Ellis

Does anyone have any experience of staying with a Palestinian family in Israel? We would love to hear about that too. Ed.

Worship Studies Foundation Course

This course is aimed at those wishing to 'take the service'. It can be a daunting prospect, without any training. Let the North West Provincial Assembly show you the way.

We are offering a four-part course, leading to a GA-recognised qualification, the Worship Studies Foundation Course. All the sessions will be held at Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester M1 2RU and will be on a Saturday.

Dates: 16 and 30 June, 14 and 28 July 2018

Times: 10.30am to 4.00pm (coffee/tea from 10 am)

Total Cost: £55.00 (£15.00 registration fee payable in advance; £10.00 for each session or you can pay the whole amount up front)

You must attend all four parts and two services of worship must be assessed to get your certificate.

Refreshments will be provided during the day, but please bring your own lunch.

See our website for any updates

www.ukunitarian.org.uk/northwestprovincialassembly

Please send your name, address and email together with your cheque for £15.00 deposit or £55.00 full fee made payable to 'North West Provincial Assembly' to Rev Lynne Readett, 57 Douglas Street, Atherton, Manchester M46 9EB, by 1 June 2018. Phone Lynne on 01942 893 965 or e mail rev.lynne@hotmail.com for any other information.

"Churches that welcome gay couples see congregations grow" Pink News (15 January 2018)

<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/01/15/churches-that-welcome-gay-couples-see-congregations-grow/>

Events

26th February to 11th March – [Fairtrade Fortnight](#)

3rd March – [Multi Faith Centre Open Day](#) (see article)

8th March – 2pm - [Guided walk](#) from Tourist Information Centre – 'The Wonderful Women of Ipswich' - book!

10th March – [Workshop in Bury MH](#) (see article)

13th March – 7pm [Conversations in the Upper Room](#) – 'When we die we go to ...?' Sharing our stories and ideas concerning the afterlife.

13th March - [Faith Lecture](#) at University of Suffolk with Tim Winters, Lecturer in Islamic Studies, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge Uni. At UoS Waterfront Building 5.30 for 6pm. Book via UoS 16th March - [Film Night](#) at Quaker MH 7pm – 'Into the Wild'.

17th March – Ipswich Art Gallery – [Lego Ipswich](#) (and St Patrick's Day!)

29th March – [Poetry Group](#) meeting 2pm – this month's poet is Edward Thomas

4th to 7th April – [General Assembly Annual Meeting](#)

Services – will be led by our Minister Lewis Connolly on 4th; 11th; 18th; 25th

11th – Mothering Sunday – please help fill the Meeting House with daffodils for this service.

18th – Emptying the restoration collection tins

Good Friday 30th March – Communion service at 10.45
Easter Sunday on 1st April – bring Easter bonnets!

Birthdays in March

Happy birthday to Joel Waller on 7th and to Jenny Pile on 24th.

Restoration tins

After the service on the 18th March we will be having the BIG COUNT of the contents of the Restoration tins distributed a year ago. If you wish to retain the same tin for this ongoing collection, please mark it in some way before presenting it at the 'counting table' If unable to attend on the 18th March, tins may be brought in before or afterwards & given to Paulette, Karen or Linda.

Miranda's Bike Ride

Miranda McIntosh's bike ride has been completed and all monies gathered in, producing a grand total of £240 towards the Meeting House Restoration Fund.

Well done Miranda, an incredible achievement & we hope it won't be too long before you are able to join us again at the Meeting House.

Interfaith update

We are sending you this email to bring you up to date with the inter-faith scene in this part of what was the East of England region. In Suffolk, there have been significant changes. Two years ago, the trustees of Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource decided to close their charity and SIFRE has now been superseded by three local inter-faith groups: Ipswich Faith and Community Forum, Waveney Interfaith Circle and West Suffolk Interfaith and Community Forum.

Meanwhile, the East of England Faiths Agency has continued much as before by supporting schools with their faith and culture lessons, by running the occasional conference and by contributing to various inter-agency projects, such as 'Spiritual Care in Suffolk Care Homes'.

However, having lost accommodation it previously shared with SIFRE in rooms provided by the University of Suffolk, EEFA and SIFRE staff expended much time and energy relocating resources and undertaking huge re-visioning exercises.

EEFA is now hoping to consolidate its role in the region by providing further opportunities for inter-faith enthusiasts to meet together, to stimulate each other and to disseminate other resources which can be used to develop inter-faith awareness across the region.

Within the last six months, EEFA has been offered the use of a suite of 5 rooms on the first floor of a building owned by the East of England Co-operative Society. It has now taken possession of these rooms which it intends to use for the benefit of inter-faith relationships. The rooms will provide EEFA with an office, a faith and diversity training room, a seminar room with a capacity of about 40 people, a resources/research room and a general office which will be shared by other interested faith and inter-faith groups who have no accommodation of their own. Please note that the floor is only accessed by a staircase; we regret that it does not have provision for those with poor mobility. However we are looking into the possibility of relaying our meetings over the internet.

EEFA is planning an OPEN DAY for its new Centre – to be known as 'THE EAST OF ENGLAND MULTI-FAITH CENTRE' on Saturday 3rd March between 10:30 AM and 4:00 PM. If you would like to come along, please let us know by emailing us at office@eefa.net stating the expected time of your visit. Please let your friends and colleagues know about this venture.

The EEMFC address is 47 St Helens Street, Ipswich, IP4

2JL. The building stands back from the road and it has a small car park which will be available on the day on a 'first come first served' basis. Entry is by a door at the rear of the building (not by the door which leads to the Co-op Funeral Service Offices). The door is normally kept locked but, on this occasion, it will be open and attended throughout the open day.

Best Regards

David Capey,

Hon Executive Officer

The East of England Faiths Agency.

Telephone 01379 678615

Email office@eefa.net

General Assembly Annual Meeting

This year's GA meeting takes place in Daventry from 4th to 7th April. Minister Lewis Connolly will be there as well as your representative for this year, Tessa Forsdike. The motions to vote on will be available soon and Tessa will be pleased to hear your opinions and suggestions for this, her first visit to a GA meeting.

Hucklow Summer School - 18-25 August 2018

Hucklow Summer School is now open for applications. The theme for 2018 is 'How, Then, Shall We Live? Living, Dying, and Considering Our Legacy'. The core purpose of summer school is religious education: we focus on matters of religion and spirituality and intend to draw out and develop the potential of all participants. We aim to provide a balanced programme, offering a rich mix of activities for both the heart and head, and a variety of optional sessions showcasing a range of worthwhile activities which participants might 'take home' and try out in their own congregations and communities. We also ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for relaxed fellowship and fun during the week.

In a series of daily theme talks our team of speakers will offer their perspectives on the question of how we should live in light of the knowledge that we, just like all those who have ever lived, will ultimately die. What does a 'good life' look like? And how can we live a good and faithful life in practice, especially when we find ourselves in challenging personal circumstances, and as troubling world events unfold around us? What constitutes a 'good death' – and how can we best prepare ourselves for dying? And how might it prove

Hucklow Summer School – cont.

fruitful to reflect on our own legacy – individually and collectively – while we are still in the midst of life, or even as we begin to sense that our lives are drawing to a close?

Our theme speakers for 2018 are Jane Blackall, Michael Allured, Rob Gregson, Helen Simpson and Bill Darlison. A selection of daily engagement groups exploring the theme are on offer, led by a team of skilled facilitators, including Claire MacDonald, Mark Stewart, Kate Dean, Elizabeth Harley, Dot Hewerdine, Katie McKenna, Jef Jones and Danny Crosby.

The basic full-board cost for an adult in a shared room is £520. Bursaries are available if needed to help with the cost of attending. For more details and to download an application form, see:

www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk

Sign Language in a Paris Café

I met a person in Paris once who taught me about ‘grit’ and the human capacity to persevere. It was 1992. My family, Jean, Madeleine, Eric and myself along with an American family living in England, took a holiday week to visit Paris. The other family had come to England because the father was an Air Force Colonel.

So here we are, eight of us, wandering around Paris, trying to agree on what kind of restaurant to choose. One person wants just a clean restaurant. One person wants Burger King. One person wants pizza, one person wants Chinese. The flexible eaters are always in the middle, saying *‘This one is okay with me’*. The hungry ones are ready to take anything.

After much looking, grumbling and complaining, we finally find a nice little café and organize ourselves around a large table. We are barely speaking to each other at this point. As we look over menus, a woman comes into the restaurant, spies us and comes to the table. She hands each one of us a slip of paper on which it is printed *‘I am deaf and use sign language’*. On the slip of paper are about twelve words and their basic signs, such as *‘yes, no, thank you, love, hello goodbye’*.

As she stands beside our table, we become uncomfortable, slowly realizing that she wants money from us. The adults push their faces back

into their menus, but one of the daughters begins to sign back and forth with the woman. As their wordless, silent conversation continues, we all look up and watch the hand gestures flying back and forth. When the restaurant owner comes over and hustles the woman out of the restaurant, we all follow, adults with Euros in hand to give her, children signing goodbye.

Back in the restaurant, around the table, we talk about this woman with grit and how marvellously surprised we are to see one of our children using the sign language that she has learned at school. We marvel over how the woman who came to us for help, ultimately helped us. Faced with an opportunity for hospitality, the adults at first declined, while the children went right ahead. The deaf woman with grit had transformed us from being unconnected to being connected again with each other, open to life, wonder, the unexpected, grace and generosity.

Our eyes opened, our hearts responded, We were together again. Food fills the body, but love makes us whole.

From David Robins’ book *‘True enough to Remember’*. David was an exchange Minister at our Meeting House over 25 years ago.

Disclaimer

We welcome contributions from all members and friends of our congregation. Views expressed in the articles are those of the individual and not necessarily those of our congregation or of our Unitarian community.

Contacts

Contributions for the next newsletter to Tessa please before the deadline of Sunday 25th March 2018 – to ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS

To contact our Secretary, Riena Jackson, ring 01473 210064/email mjack76748@aol.com

To contact our Minister, Lewis Connolly, ring 01473 422528/email

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Thought for the month

When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.

Dalai Lama